International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

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Committee on Enforced Disappearance

Concluding observations on the report submitted by Colombia under article 29 (1) of the Convention

Addendum

Information received from Colombia on follow-up to the concluding observations*

[Date received: 4 October 2017]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

I. Definition and legal characterization of enforced disappearance

Paragraph 14

The Committee recommends that the State party expedite the process of cleansing and consolidating data on disappeared persons in order to generate reliable and accurate information that will result in more effective prevention, investigation and search measures. Accordingly, it invites the State party to set a time frame for completing the data cleansing process for the Register, with a view to effectively consolidating all cases of disappeared persons as soon as possible, while retaining the most comprehensive information possible. The Committee further recommends that the State party:

(a) Make greater efforts to ensure that, without exception, all cases of disappeared persons are consistently and exhaustively recorded in the National Missing Persons Register immediately after a disappearance is reported and that the Register is continuously updated;

(b) Adopt effective measures to move forward in the classification of as many cases as possible;

(c) Take the necessary steps to generate statistical information that indicates the extent of the problem of enforced disappearances in the strict sense of the term, that is, disappearances where State agents were allegedly involved, directly or indirectly, in committing the offence.

1. With regard to the above recommendation, the Colombian Government, through the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science, the technical secretariat of the Disappeared Persons Investigative Commission, started work on inter-agency coordination to ensure that entities with useful information at their disposal contribute to the National Missing Persons Register. The Attorney General's Office, the Comprehensive Victim Support and Reparation Unit and the National Anti-Kidnapping Department of the Ministry of Defence all participated in this process.

2. As a result of the process, 246,602 records were submitted by those entities. This figure constituted the presumptive total number of records of forcibly disappeared persons at the time; work is continuing with a view to collecting quality information to facilitate the search for disappeared persons.

3. In that context, once the submitted records were checked, it became evident that each contributing institution needed to undertake a process of internal revision of the data originally registered in its institutional databases, with a view to making the necessary corrections and thus guaranteeing the quality of the data to be submitted to the National Missing Persons Register.

4. Given that this work requires manual checks and the review of each individual case, the entities involved continue to work together to search for and gather information to speed up the process and consolidate the information in the Missing Persons and Corpses Information Network.

5. For example, on 27 January 2017, decision No. 0045 of 2017 on reforming the structure and functions of the Attorney General's Office was adopted with a view to improving and cleansing its internal databases.

6. In this connection, under decision No. 3481 of 31 October 2016, the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Transitional Justice was given responsibility for the authorization, consolidation, cleansing and dissemination of figures and statistics on enforced disappearance from the Attorney General's Office. It has been carrying out this work in coordination with other departments with competence in that area.

7. In order to support the implementation of this work, an internal working group on the consolidation of figures on enforced disappearance during the internal armed conflict was set up in the Office for Transitional Justice by decision No. 0045 of 2017. The group's

objective, in the medium term, is to gather information on disappeared persons from all the units of the Attorney General's Office with competence in this area and to ensure that the information is of sufficient quantity and quality to adequately indicate the extent of the problem of enforced disappearance and analyse its different variables.

8. This will help the Attorney General's Office share its information with other entities, thus helping to consolidate reliable national data. In this way it is hoped that, in the medium term, the information collected, cleansed and consolidated by the Attorney General's Office can be compared against databases such as the Missing Persons and Corpses Information Network and the National Missing Persons Register.

Data cleansing

9. In order to register, cleanse, review and include information on all cases of enforced disappearance in the Information Network, the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science conducts regular training and refresher training for officials at the national level in the form of identification meetings to register missing person reports, with a focus on data quality.

10. In addition, the National Institute has signed agreements with various universities with the aim of training officials on human rights and data quality, which are fundamental to ensuring an effective process for reporting enforced disappearances.

11. In compliance with the guidelines issued at the central level, the regional branches of the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science conduct permanent monitoring and follow-up of the quality of data in missing person reports registered in the Missing Persons and Corpses Information Network.

12. In order to measure the impact and evaluate the results of monitoring, and to take the necessary action in response to the findings, the Subdirectorate of Forensic Services of the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science meets monthly with the regional directors to consider the positive results and the areas for improvement identified during the process. This makes it possible to update the guidelines in a timely manner and to optimize the registration of information in the system.

13. These efforts have yielded clear results. To date, the National Missing Persons Register contains 121,194 records of missing persons, of which 25,196 are related to cases of presumed enforced disappearance; these figures correspond to the historic records available in the Missing Persons and Corpses Information Network and include reports of missing persons from 1938 to 31 August 2017.

Classification of cases reported as enforced disappearances

14. In order to ensure the effective classification of reported cases of enforced disappearance in the Missing Persons and Corpses Information Network, the format for the registration of missing persons was revised, and now includes additional fields related to the context so as to provide the entity responsible for investigating the case with more information.

15. In addition, inter-agency efforts have continued with the International Committee of the Red Cross and victims' organizations to structure and define a comprehensive format for collecting information needed to seek, locate and identify disappeared persons in the context and as a result of the armed conflict.

Steps taken to generate statistical information that indicates the extent of the problem of enforced disappearance

16. The National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science takes a range of steps to ensure the reliability of the statistical data available in the Missing Persons and Corpses Information Network; to this end it cleanses and corrects fields related to such variables as the date of disappearance compared to the date the disappearance was reported, the place of disappearance and the person's age at the time of the disappearance compared to his or her current age. In addition, the number of variables related to the context and conditions of the

disappearance has also been increased, which means there is more information in the statistical reports to guide in efforts to seek, locate, identify and return disappeared persons.

17. In order to determine the scale of the phenomenon of enforced disappearance, the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science designed a tool known as the "Observatory", available on its webpage at http:/dwww.medicinalegal.gov.co/observatorio, which contains information related to missing persons and fatal and non-fatal injuries from external causes in Colombia.

18. In addition, the Institute prepares expert activity reports using what are known as "direct statistics" from the web-based Missing Persons and Corpses Information Network, in the case of fatal injuries, and the web-based Forensic Clinical Services and Dentistry Information System, in the case of non-fatal injuries. The Institute also receives what is known as "indirect" statistical information from doctors in the health-care sector who serve as medical examiners when necessary.

19. The inclusion of this information complements the work carried out by the Institute itself and contributes to a more detailed evaluation of the scale of the scourge of disappearance in Colombia, as well as violent deaths, injuries and other forms of violence.

20. The results of the statistical analysis are published in the annual *Forensis: Datos para la Vida* (Forensics: Data for Life) report, which is one of the tools used by the National Reference Centre on Violence to disseminate information on the principal forms of violence, as derived from forensic science. It is made available in all the relevant institutions and has become a fundamental aid to research on violence and decision-making and policymaking on the prevention of violence; it is also consulted by various governmental and non-governmental organizations, academics and the general public.

21. The Government is currently updating and adjusting the variables used to identify issues related to gender equality, vulnerable groups, sexual identity and orientation, among others.

II. Criminal responsibility and judicial cooperation in relation to enforced disappearance

Paragraph 20

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that in practice, where there are reasonable grounds for believing that a person has been subjected to enforced disappearance, a thorough, impartial investigation is undertaken immediately, even if there has not been a formal complaint;

(b) Expedite the investigations of enforced disappearance that are under way, including those carried out as part of the special criminal proceedings being conducted in the framework of the justice and peace process, while ensuring that no act of enforced disappearance is left unpunished;

(c) Expand its efforts to allow the relatives of disappeared persons to submit complaints; encourage and facilitate their participation in investigations and in all the procedural steps included within the framework of due process; and ensure that they are regularly informed about the progress and results of investigations;

(d) Ensure effective coordination and cooperation between all the agencies involved in investigations so that they mutually reinforce, rather than impede, each other's work; and ensure that they have the necessary financial, technical and human resources to perform their duties expeditiously and effectively;

(e) Adopt a common approach to investigations, following specific strategies based on similar crime commission patterns and regional contexts and avoiding fragmented investigations that undermine their own effectiveness;

(f) Ensure that the authorities involved in the investigation of enforced disappearances have effective and timely access to all documentation and other

information relevant to the investigation that may be in the possession of State agencies, in particular documentation held by intelligence agencies and by armed and security forces.

22. In this respect, as soon as a case of alleged disappearance is brought to its attention, the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science reports the person as missing in the Information Network and makes the necessary arrangements to continue the formal complaint procedure. Firstly, it informs the victim of his or her rights and obligations during the process, provides guidance on how to lodge a formal complaint and about the public consultation tool available on the Institute's webpage, through which the steps taken in searching for the disappeared person can be followed. It then notifies the authority responsible for the investigation of any new developments, for it to take the appropriate action.

23. In addition, in accordance with the legislation in force, the Institute activates urgent search mechanisms and works to ensure the permanent follow-up of this process. The following tables highlight activated urgent search mechanisms, disaggregated by status of search and department of disappearance between January and August of the year in question.

2017 (Table 1) and 2016 (Table 2)

Table 1

Activated urgent search mechanisms by status of search and department of disappearance, Colombia, 2017 (January to August)

Department of disappearance	*Completed*	*Pending*	*Total*
Antioquia	11	7	18
Arauca			
Bogotá, D.C.	9	3	12
Bolívar			1
Boyacá	2	7	9
Caldas			1
Casan Are			1
Cauca		5	5
Chocó		2	2
Cundinamarca	2	5	7
Guaviare	2		2
Huila			2
La Guajira			
Magdalena		2	2
Meta	2	5	7
Seafarer	4	11	15
Norte de Santander		6	6
Putumayo		3	3
San Andrés and Providencia			
Santander		3	3
Tolima	3	7	10
Valle del Cauca		8	9
Vaupés			
Other countries		2	2
Total	**38**	**83**	**121**

National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science/National Reference Centre on Violence. Missing Persons and Corpses Information Network.

Table 2
Activated urgent search mechanisms by status of search and department of disappearance, Colombia, 2016

Department of disappearance	*Completed*	*Pending*	*Total*
Antioquia		21	38
Arauca		5	6
Bogotá, D.C.	12	8	20
Bolívar			1
Boyacá	7	8	15
Caldas		4	5
Cauca		5	5
Cesar		3	3
Chocó		3	3
Cundinamarca	6	7	13
Guaviare	6		7
Huila			1
Magdalena		5	5
Meta	2	21	23
Nariño	8	8	15
Norte de Santander		7	7
Putumayo			1
Risaralda			
San Andrés and Providencia			
Santander	4	2	6
Sucre			2
Tolima	3	8	11
Valle del Cauca	2	10	12
Vaupés			1
Other countries			12
Total	**72**	**132**	**204**

National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science/National Reference Centre on Violence. Missing Persons and Corpses Information Network.

24. The National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science contributes to investigations into enforced disappearances conducted by the competent authorities. It does so by cleansing information, ensuring the quality of the data recorded in the information system and reporting cases received by the Disappeared Persons Investigative Commission. In this way it adds to the information available in each case.

25. In order to support investigations into enforced disappearances, the Attorney General's Office has introduced three important tools into its investigation, indictment and trial methodologies, namely: the elaboration of contexts; the identification of patterns of macro-criminality in the actions of demobilized paramilitary and self-defence groups; and the prioritization policy, based on Act No. 975 of 2005, which contains provisions for the reintegration of members of illegal organized armed groups who effectively contribute to national peace, and other provisions for humanitarian agreements.

26. To this end, the Office of the Special Prosecutor of the Attorney General's Office has designed a prioritization plan for situations and cases with a view to identifying patterns of macro-criminality in the actions of organized illegal groups, discovering their contexts,

causes and motives, and focusing investigations on some of the people most responsible and on certain macro structures.

27. The implementation of these investigation strategies has yielded significant results in combating impunity in cases of enforced disappearance, as reflected in the fact that charges have been brought in 5,171 cases of enforced disappearance, of which 2,474 have resulted in hearings in which charges were laid and defendants pleaded guilty.

Steps taken to facilitate the search for disappeared persons

28. The Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace signed by the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — People's Army) (FARC-EP) provides for the establishment of a special unit for the search for persons presumed disappeared in the context and by reason of the armed conflict, with a view to fulfilling victims' rights to the truth and to reparations.

29. During extraordinary sessions and following the special fast-track legislative procedure, Congress debated Legislative Act No. 01 of 2017 on the establishment of a section in the Constitution containing transitional provisions on the end of the armed conflict and the building of a stable and lasting peace, which was adopted in April 2017 and gave constitutional status to the comprehensive system of truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition, including the establishment of the special unit for the search for persons presumed disappeared.

30. Legislative Act No. 01 of 2017, which creates the components of the comprehensive system of truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition, provides for the establishment of regulations on the organization of each component. Accordingly, on 5 July the President of the Republic promulgated Decree-Law No. 589 of 2017 on the organization of the special unit for the search for persons presumed disappeared in the context and by reason of the armed conflict.

31. Following the adoption of Decree-Law No. 589, the relevant steps were taken to set up the unit and make it operational. This process is ongoing and is expected to be completed in 2017.

32. The special unit for the search for persons presumed disappeared will be a humanitarian, extrajudicial body with administrative and financial independence and autonomy. It is part of the comprehensive system of truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition, and will carry out its duties in the framework of that system.

33. This unit's role will be to manage, coordinate and contribute to the implementation of humanitarian actions to search for and locate living persons presumed missing in the context and by reason of the armed conflict. In the event that the individual has died, the unit's role will be, whenever possible, to recover, identify and return the remains in a dignified manner. This is done in the framework of the Agreement between the Government and FARC and its principle concerning the centrality of victims' rights and the realization of their right to the truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition.

34. The unit will have a territorial, differentiated and gender-sensitive approach, responding to the specific characteristics of victims in each region and each population. In particular, it will give priority to protecting and supporting women and children victims of the armed conflict. The gender-sensitive and differentiated approach will be applied in all of the unit's stages and procedures, especially with respect to women who suffered during, or participated in, the conflict.

35. In application of the constitutional principles of Colombia, and in accordance with some of the recommendations made by the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, the unit will, with the participation of victims and civil society, take action to establish the whereabouts of girls and women reported as disappeared.

36. Once the unit's Advisory Committee has been formed, article 8 of Act No. 589 of 2000 will be amended to read as follows:

"... *A permanent national commission for the search for disappeared persons is hereby created with a view to supporting and promoting the investigation of the crime of enforced disappearance in cases not committed in the context and by reason of the armed conflict, with full respect for institutional competences and the prerogatives of the various parties to the proceedings*".

Participation of the relatives of disappeared persons

37. In view of the foregoing, the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science has made available on its webpage a public consultation tool, through which the relatives of disappeared persons can follow the steps taken by the various agencies to seek, locate and identify disappeared persons. This tool is actively updated and directly linked to the reports registered in the Missing Persons and Corpses Information Network.

38. The Institute has established strategic partnerships that enable it to report on the results of searches for, location, identification and return of disappeared persons. For example, a partnership has been formed with *El Tiempo* daily newspaper, resulting in a project entitled "The deceased nobody claims". In addition to reflecting the depth on the tragedy of disappeared persons in the country, this initiative also acts as a missing persons search tool.

39. Thanks to the initiative, persons with a missing family member or relative can consult the Eltiempo.com webpage, the most frequently visited site in the country, to check whether or not the person has died. If the search is positive, data are also provided on the registration of the case, the forensic service that carried out the autopsy and the corresponding contact numbers. This service is provided in response to the fact that there are at least 15,000 fully identified corpses in Colombia that have never been claimed by their relatives.

40. As a result of this joint effort, *El Tiempo* was awarded the 2017 award for journalistic excellence in the human rights and community service category by the Inter-American Press Association.

41. The National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science also has the LIFE tool (location of forensic statistical information), which is considered one of its most useful reference tools. This application provides georeferenced information in real time on the number of disappeared persons, unidentified corpses and violent deaths in Colombia, disaggregated by department, sex and age, among other variables.

42. Anyone can consult this application directly from the Institute's webpage at www.medicinalegal.gov.co, clicking on LIFE (*Localización de Información Forense Estadística*), where figures are available on disappeared persons by gender, type of disappearance (presumed enforced disappearance or unknown) and the status of the case (appeared alive, deceased or still missing); unidentified corpses, with figures by gender and age; violent deaths, with figures by type of death (homicide, accidental, suicide, natural, unknown); and cases under agreement No. 01 of 2010. The latter provides access to figures on deceased persons who have been identified in the framework of Inter-agency Cooperation Agreement No. 01 of 2010 and are waiting to be recovered in the country's cemeteries.

43. LIFE is part of preventive and corrective public policy on such complex social problems as disappearance and unidentified bodies.

Institutional coordination

44. Steps have been taken to strengthen institutional coordination related to the search for disappeared persons. As the governing body of the National System of Forensic Medicine and Science, the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science is cognizant of the need to provide satisfactory responses to more victims' relatives, and it has proposed and is leading the drafting of minimum forensic standards for the search for disappeared persons and the recovery and identification of corpses.

45. In order to develop these standards, the Institute convened the entities involved in the process of seeking, locating, identifying and returning disappeared persons, as well as victims' organizations, universities, international cooperation agencies, the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team and NGOs, among others. The aim was to produce a comprehensive document that would contribute to interdisciplinary efforts and, in turn, serve as a reference for improving technical processes in institutions involved in these activities.

46. The results of this initiative were successful and led to the publication and national dissemination of the book *Estándares Forenses Mínimos para la búsqueda de Personas Desparecidas y la Recuperación e Identificación de Cadáveres* (Minimum Forensic Standards for the Search for Disappeared Persons and the Recovery and Identification of Corpses), which has been welcomed by most of the entities involved in this process, including the Attorney General's Office, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the National Police.

47. The development of these standards and their impact on the process of searching for disappeared persons and recovering corpses was recognized by the United States of America through the International Association of Police Chiefs Leadership in Forensic Science Award, highlighting the proactive and innovative use of forensic technology for law enforcement, which will be presented to the Director General of the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science in October 2017.

48. In relation to strengthening institutional coordination processes, the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science received funding to search for disappeared persons and recover and identify corpses through an investment project submitted to the National Planning Department entitled "Strengthening forensic procedures in the search for, identification and investigation of deaths — violation of human rights and international humanitarian law", which was allocated Col$ 2,000,000,000 for the current period.

Paragraph 26

The Committee recommends that the State party pursue and intensify its efforts to search for, locate and release disappeared persons and, in the event of death, to locate, handle with respect and return their remains. In particular, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure in practice that, when a disappearance is reported, a search is initiated automatically, without delay; that practical, effective search measures are adopted in order to increase the chances of finding the person alive; and that the search is continued until the fate of the disappeared person is established;

(b) Intensify its efforts to locate bodily remains; enhance the Genetic Profile Bank, in particular by conducting extensive campaigns to collect ante-mortem information and genetic samples from disappeared persons' relatives, with a special focus on rural areas; and expedite the identification and handover of the exhumed remains;

(c) Adopt more effective measures to ensure coordination, cooperation and data cross-checking between the agencies responsible for searching for disappeared persons and, in the event of death, for identifying their remains, and see to it that they have the necessary qualified personnel and economic and technical resources;

(d) Redouble its efforts to ensure that all relevant authorities receive regular, specialized training on the measures provided for in the existing regulatory framework pertaining to the search for disappeared persons and, in the event of death, on handling with respect and returning their remains, in particular, the correct implementation of the National Plan on the Search for Disappeared Persons and the Urgent Search Mechanism;

(e) Ensure that searches are conducted by the competent authorities with the active involvement of the relatives of the disappeared person where necessary;

(f) **Intensify its efforts to ensure that all actions to identify and return remains duly take into account the traditions and customs of the peoples or communities to which the victims belong, in particular indigenous peoples or Afrodescendent communities.**

49. With regard to the recommendations contained in paragraph 26 of the Committee's concluding observations, the entities involved in the National Missing Persons Register have internal guidelines to ensure compliance with Act No. 971 of 2005 regulating the Urgent Search Mechanism and other provisions, which include inter-agency plans that allow relatives who report cases to access such guarantees and provide guidance to the general public on such access.

50. Similarly, as administrator of the Register, the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science has introduced into the Missing Persons and Corpses Information Network fields for the follow-up of the Urgent Search Mechanism. The new fields enable the more than 5,000 users nationwide to see immediately when a case has been activated and to deal with the expedited search processes for finding missing persons, which is the sole objective of the Urgent Search Mechanism. As a result of this process, as mentioned previously, the Institute activated 204 urgent search mechanisms in 2016 and 121 between January and August 2017.

51. The efforts made by Colombia also include considerable work by the Attorney General's Office, whose internal working group on exhumations has managed to find 5,267 clandestine graves and recovered 8,464 bodies, of which 3,921 have been returned to their relatives in dignified ceremonies.

52. In this context, the Attorney General's Office has made changes to the working methods of the internal working group on the search for, identification and return of disappeared persons, giving priority to providing information and documenting corpses found in laboratories and storage facilities and returning them to their loved ones in such a way that victims' rights are effectively fulfilled.

53. These changes focus on undertaking activities to locate disappeared persons through detailed documentation and investigation of information on the person prior to his or her disappearance and consultation of various sources of information that might indicate his or her whereabouts, so that when bodies are exhumed the chances of identifying them are maximized.

54. With regard to locating skeletal remains, the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science is implementing the national plan for the search for, identification and dignified return of the remains of persons who disappeared in the context and by reason of the armed conflict, which to date has resulted in operations in six of the country's cemeteries and the recovery of 392 bodies, which have undergone medical, anthropological and dental examinations. In addition to the six cemetery operations already carried out, the Institute is collecting information to undertake an operation at the cemetery in Florencia, Caquetá, where it expects to recover some 600 bodies, with exhumation work beginning in October 2017. In addition, diagnostic work is under way at the Cúcuta cemetery, where it is expected that some 900 bodies will be recovered.

55. In relation to the databank of genetic profiles of disappeared persons, the table below shows the requests received in the second quarter of 2017. They were submitted to each institution by different authorities and institutional working groups in order to profile the samples of relatives of disappeared persons, as well as skeletal remains, and enter them in the databank.

Applicant authority	*DIJIN**			*Total*
District prosecutor's offices	2	62	9	73
Special prosecutor's offices		76	33	109
Local prosecutor's offices				
National units				

Applicant authority	*DIJIN**			*Total*
Identification groups	14		68	82
Exhumation units	5		55	60
Search, Identification and Return Group		97		97
National Unit against Displacement and Enforced Disappearance		30	3	33
National Analysis and Context Department				
National Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Department		15	2	
Other	3		279	282
Total	**24**	**280**	**449**	**753**

Number of requests, listed by applicant, to the databank of genetic profiles of disappeared persons from 1 April to 31 June 2017.

* Criminal Investigation and Interpol Department of the National Police.

** Technical Investigation Body of the Attorney General's Office.

*** National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science.

56. In the second quarter of 2017, 1,611 new profiles were added to the national databank. Of them, 146 corresponded to unidentified skeletal remains and 1,343 to the relatives of disappeared persons.

57. A further 152 profiles were entered from crossmatching exercises that proved inconclusive, 44 from skeletal remains and 78 from relatives linked to them.

58. As of 30 June 2017 there were a total of 42,747 profiles in the national genetic databank, which means that there was an increase of 2,986 profiles in the second quarter. The following table shows the addition of profiles by type and institution.

Type	*DIJIN*	*CTI*	*INML*	*National databank total*
Disappeared persons (unidentified bodies)	63	825	2 770	3 658
Family member	59	20 507	4 366	24 932
Other relatives	49	9 330	1 331	1 898
Checked matches (family)	208	359	1 331	1 549
Checked matches (remains)	5	205	1 339	1 549
Total	**384**	**31 226**	**10 965**	**42 747**

Total number of profiles in the national databank as of 30 June 2017.

59. The genetic databank has been a successful search and guidance tool in identifying disappeared persons in Colombia. The figure of 156 checked matches corresponds only to cases in which a report issued by a genetic laboratory led to possible identification in a specific case, following which the body could be returned to the family. However, this figure is probably lower than the real number of identified cases as, using the tools currently available to the authorities, it is not possible to follow up on all cases that have benefited from findings from the genetic databank.

Obtaining ante-mortem information and genetic samples from the relatives of missing persons

60. The National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences has held sessions for victims and sample-taking campaigns in Vista Hermosa, Meta (resulting in 110 family samples and 87 missing person reports) and Catatumbo, Norte de Santander (320 family samples corresponding to 100 cases of forced disappearance), and there are plans to hold

another session before the end of 2017 in San José del Guaviare, Guaviare. The latter campaign was conducted in stages: first a training day was held for relatives to inform them about the goals of the initiative, the processing of information and samples and the relevant procedures. Once that was complete, the sample-taking process began.

Training of authorities

61. With regard to regular and specialized training, in May 2017 an identification course was organized by the national groups of forensic pathology and the national network of unidentified corpses and missing persons, including a panel discussion on standards, mechanisms and instruments to address the crime of enforced disappearance, in which the nature, scope and applicability of the Urgent Search Mechanism in the forensic context was explained.

62. In addition, the technical secretariat of the Disappeared Persons Investigative Commission, under the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences, has carried out three training sessions so far this year on standards, mechanisms and national and international instruments to deal with the crime of enforced disappearance, in the cities of Buenaventura, Barrancabermeja and Fusagasugá. Similarly, the Institute's subdirectorates of scientific research and forensic services have organized the following training courses:

Name of training course	*Number of officials trained*	*Start date*	*End date*
Customer service: a personal challenge	30	30 May 2017	30 June 2017
Course on drafting articles	6	16 May 2017	22 June 2017
Diploma in human rights — intermediate	35	25 April 2017	25 July 2017
Diploma in gender and conflict	16	25 April 2017	25 July 2017
Setting up ballistics laboratories	9	22 May 2017	25 May 2017
Forensics for accreditation	5	15 May 2017	16 May 2017
Seminar on duties, rights and obligations	11	23 May 2017	26 June 2017
National seminar on the search for and identification of missing persons	82	5 June 2017	4 June 2017
Course on validation of analytical methods	1	21 June 2017	27 August 2017
Qualitative and quantitative	15	30 October 2017	4 May 2017
Online course on management of research projects	11	12 June 2017	14 June 2017
Basic course on recovery and analysis of skeletal remains in post-conflict contexts	21	21 April 2017	21 April 2017
Setting up authorized dermatoglyphic laboratories	6	21 June 2017	21 June 2017
Taking reference samples from relatives of missing persons for purposes of identification	100	8 August 2017	25 September 2017
Activity on recovery of	81	11 September 2017	25 September 2017
Amendment of arts. 111 to 121 of Act No. 599 of 2000			

Name of training course	*Number of officials trained*	*Start date*	*End date*
Online course on data quality, IT culture and constitutional requirements related to human rights	6	14 November 2017	27 November 2017
Prevention of consumption of psychoactive substances, self-care, refresher session for pathology officials 1984–2014	4	18 September 2017	18 September 2017
Training on taking oral mucosa samples	1	5 April 2017	5 April 2017
Diploma in document and records management	4	September 2017	December 2017
Course on analysis of causes, indicators, risks and corrective action	12	9 October 2017	10 October 2017
Integrated management systems	12	11 September 2017	6 October 2017
Prevention of biological risks and self-care	6	21 September 2017	25 October 2017
Course on gender-based violence	8	2 October 2017	7 December 2017